

## Fostering a New Generation Of Outdoor Enthusiasts

The newest *Conserving the Future* implementation team – the Outdoor Recreation Team – is developing a strategy to expand outdoor recreation on national wildlife refuges to fulfill Recommendation 18 (<http://1.usa.gov/1yftGMA>). The goal is to create a Refuge System recreation program that is relevant and accessible to all Americans in order to create a connected conservation constituency.

The team is chaired by Marcia Pradines, chief of the Division of Visitor Services and Communications; Will Meeks, assistant regional director for refuges in the Mountain-Prairie Region; and Charlie Blair, assistant regional director for refuges in the Midwest Region.

“The Hunting, Fishing and Outdoor Recreation Team did a terrific job writing a strategic plan that will advance hunting and fishing on national wildlife refuges,” said Pradines. “This new team will focus on recreation that is both compatible to the wildlife conservation mission of refuges but also more accessible to ‘nature novices.’ This team is considering how to invite them to enjoy and care about wildlife, and help them become comfortable enjoying the great outdoors.”

The Outdoor Recreation Team is assembling four sub-teams, working to prepare draft products as early as July. The sub-teams are:

- **Recreation Access:** The team will look at improving signs along highways and at other places that inform visitors and also research how transportation affects access. The team will consider how to streamline national guidance on accessibility, and calculate what it will cost in infrastructure investments to provide better access.
- **Appropriate Refuge Uses:** The team will develop additional appropriate uses guidance to focus on activities that attract new and diverse audiences and encourage partnerships with communities. New guidance would not compromise the standard that all recreation must be compatible with a refuge’s conservation mission.
- **Wildlife Observation/Photography:** In an era when so many people have great cameras in their smartphones, the team is seeking to establish a photography initiative. The team will expand online resources – and develop training and mentoring opportunities for refuge staff and volunteers – in an effort to provide the Refuge System’s photography offerings to a broader cross-section of the public.
- **Other Recreation:** Going beyond the “Big Six” – hunting, fishing, wildlife photography, wildlife observation, interpretation and environmental education – the team will, among other tasks, assemble examples of the kind of expansive recreation offered on some wildlife refuges. It also will ensure that at least one outdoor skills center will be launched to help foster a new generation of outdoor enthusiasts.

The concept of outdoor skills centers came from the *Conserving the Future* Hunting, Fishing and Outdoor Recreation team, which last year issued its strategy (<http://bit.ly/1vNt8dr>). It called on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to undertake steps to increase quality hunting and fishing opportunities. The team also recommended greater collaboration with state agencies in hunting and fishing programs; development of guidance for continuation of fish stocking programs and

consideration of new stocking programs; and mentoring of a new generation of outdoor enthusiasts, among other steps.

The new Outdoor Recreation Team expects complete its work in about two years.